

5 Claims: What is Claimed is:

1. A sheet feeding apparatus comprising:

10 a sheet feeder having a feed table for maintaining edgewise thereon a stack of sheets, the sheet feeder including stack advancing belts for advancing the stack toward a feeding end thereof, upper edge paper guides for maintaining upper edges of advancing sheets in the stack and separating advancing sheets thereof at minimized pressure, a singulator apparatus drawing each sequential lead sheet from the stack through a singulator aperture thereof, said creeper belts and singulator apparatus being synchronously driven in a sheet advancing direction and in a reverse direction, and a controlled sheet path gap assembly receiving sheets from the singulator apparatus including a plurality of transport ramps for directing sheets through a controlled gap;

15 a transport receiving sheets from said control lead sheet path gap for transporting sheets to a downstream device or holding sheets to form a set before transporting to a downstream device, said transport including a second sheet receiving input independent of receipt from said controlled sheet path gap assembly for inputting thereat sheets from one or more additional sheet feeding devices.

2. A dual sheet handling system comprising:

25 a sheet transport apparatus having a first sheet receiving input arranged with a singulator of a sheet feeder for delivering sheets from a stack of sheets held generally vertically by said sheet feeder;

30 said transport including an auxiliary second sheet input for receiving sheets from a second sheet feeder; and,

the first and second sheet inputs being selectively operable to receive one or more sheets from either said first or second sheet feeder, and said transport having an

5 output for moving sheets therefrom to a subsequent downstream processing device.

3. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the second input is arranged with a manually loadable feed tray.

10 4. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the second input is associated with a
universal friction feeder.

5. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the second input is associated with a vacuum feeder

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6. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the second input is associated with a one-up or two-up continuous form processor.

7. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the transport is driven by a computer central processing unit set to receivingly operate said first and second sheet inputs to receive predetermined sheet quantities directly by the operator.

8. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the transport is driven by a computer central processing unit set to receivingly operate said first and second sheet inputs to receive predetermined sheet quantities automatically by means of an integrated OMR, BCR or OCR reading system.

9. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein sheets leaving the output of said transport are directed to a downstream device and a computer central processing unit operably drives said transport to simultaneously initiate the feeding of a next sheet from either of said first or second sheet feeders.

5 10. The system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the transport is operable to accumulate a set of sheets delivered sheet-by-sheet to the transport from either of said sheet feeders, wherein upon accumulating a completed set the transport is subsequently operable to direct the set to a downstream device.

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